

# Northwest Geographic Area

## Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

### August 15, 2012

**Subject:** Heavy fine dead fuel loading, low fuel moistures and prolonged hot and dry weather will contribute to erratic and extreme fire behavior in SE Oregon and portions of south central Oregon east of HWY 97.

**Discussion:** Abundant dead fuels in SE and southcentral Oregon are the driver for continued erratic fire behavior. With the high fuel loading of grass from two seasons of productive growth and low winter snow pack, the vertical and horizontal arrangement of the fuel bed is continuous, seasonably dry and will easily carry fire. Current field samples indicate live fuel moisture for sagebrush is <60%, this coupled with disease and stress makes the brush ignite quickly and burn intensely. Expect rapid fire spread, fire whirls and extensive spotting. Probability of ignition will be high and given the fuel continuity, dry dead and live fuels, spread and intensity rates will be far beyond safe direct attack by crews and/or engines.

#### Concerns to Firefighters:

- Anticipate erratic fire behavior on emerging incidents
- Expect longer burn periods with elevated fire intensity extending after sunset
- Rapid fire spread with elongated flaming fronts, prolific and efficient spotting with mass ignition in fine fuels. Spots will gather quickly and contribute to rapid growth.
- Anticipate large areas to be consumed in a very short period of time even with light wind.
- Wind driven fires will exacerbate already dangerous burning conditions.
- Timing to reach escape routes will need to be shorter, previously adequate safety zones may need to be re-evaluated.

#### Mitigation Measures:

- For IA or ongoing fires make sure to check with local fire resources about **current conditions** of fuels or other specific concerns as some areas vary throughout the area.
- **Situational awareness** is a must to safe firefighting operations, base all action on current and expected fire behavior.
- Firefighters should exercise caution – **size up and engage fires with intention and watch for factors that contribute to changing conditions.**

**Area of Concern:** Southeast Oregon and portions of southcentral Oregon east of HWY 97.